

WIFE



BY
THE AUTHOR OF
'IT,' 'KING
SOLOMON'S WIVES,'
'BESS,' &c.

W. H. BARNES, 1882.

LONDON: LONGMANS, GREEN, & CO.

TO H. RIDER HAGGARD.

*Not in the waste beyond the swamp and sand,
The fever-haunted forest and lagoon,
Mysterious Kôr, thy fanes forsaken stand,
With lonely towers beneath the lonely Moon!
Not there doth Ayesha linger,—rune by rune
Spelling the scriptures of a people banned,—
The world is disenchanted! oversoon
Shall Europe send her spies through all the land!*

*Nay, not in Kôr, but in whatever spot,
In fields, or towns, or by the insatiate sea,
Hearts brood o'er buried Loves and unforgot,
Or wreck themselves on some Divine decree,
Or would o'er-leap the limits of our lot,
There in the Tombs and deathless, dwelleth SHE!*

DEDICATION.

*KÔR,
Jan. 30, 1887.*

DEAR ALLAN QUATERMAIN,

You, who, with others, have aided so manfully in the Restoration of King Romance, know that His Majesty is a Merry Monarch.

You will not think, therefore, that the respectful Liberty we have taken with your Wondrous Tale (as Pamela did with the 137th Psalm) indicates any lack of Loyalty to our Lady Ayesha.

Her beauties are beyond the reach of danger from Burlesque, nor does her form flit across our humble pages.

May you restore to us yet the prize of her perfections, for we, at least, can never believe that she wholly perished in the place of the Pillar of Fire!

Yours ever,

TWO OF THE AMA LO-GROLLA.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION	1
II. POLLY'S NARRATIVE	12
III. LEONORA'S DISCOVERY	18
IV. THE EQUIPMENT	27
V. DOWN THE DARK RIVER	31
VI. THE ZÛ	41
VII. AMONG THE LO-GROLLAS	49
VIII. HE	59
IX. THE POWER OF HE	76
X. A BODY IN PAWN	81

XI. THE WIZARD UNBOSOMS	91
XII. THE WIZARD'S SCHEME	97
XIII. THE PERILOUS PATH	103
XIV. THE MAGIC CHAIR	113
XV. THE END	116

CHAPTER I.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION.

As I sat, one evening, idly musing on memories of roers and Boers, and contemplating the horns of a weendigo I had shot in Labrador and the head of a Moo Cow¹ from Canada, I was roused by a ring at the door bell.

¹ A literary friend to whom I have shown your MS. says a weendigo is Ojibbeway for a cannibal. And why do you shoot poor Moo Cows?—PUBLISHER.

Mere slip of the pen. Meant a Cow Moose. Literary gent no sportsman.—ED.

All right.—PUBLISHER.

The hall-porter presently entered, bearing a huge parcel, which had just arrived by post. I opened it with all the excitement that an unexpected parcel can cause, and murmured, like Thackeray's sailor-man, 'Claret, perhaps, Mumm, I hope——'

It was a Mummy Case, by Jingo!

This was no common, or museum mummy case. The lid, with the gilded mask, was absent, and the under half or lower segment, painted all over with hieroglyphics of an unusual type, and *green* in colour—had obviously been used as a cradle for unconscious infancy. A baby had slept in the last sleeping-place of the dead! What an opportunity for the moralist! But I am not a collector of cradles.

Who had sent it, and why?

The question was settled by an envelope in a feminine hand, which, with a cylindrical packet, fell out of the Mummy Case, and contained a letter running as follows:—

'Lady Betty's, Oxford.

'My dear Sir,—You have not forgotten me and my friend Leonora O'Dolite?

'The Mummy Case which encloses this document is the Cradle of her ancient Race.

'We are, for reasons you will discover in the accompanying manuscript, about to start for Treasure Island, where, if anywhere in this earth, ready money is to be found on easy terms of personal insecurity.'

'Oh, confound it,' I cried, 'here's another fiend of a woman sending me another manuscript! They are always at it! Wants to get it into a high-class magazine, as usual.' And my guess was correct.

The letter went on:—

'You, who are so well known, will have no difficulty in getting the editor of the Nineteenth Century, or the Quarterly Review, or Bow Bells, to accept my little contribution. I shall be glad to hear what remuneration I am to expect, and cheques may be forwarded to

'Yours very truly,

'MARY MARTIN.

'P.S.—The mummy case is very valuable. Please deposit it at the Old Bank, in the High, where it will represent my balance.

'M. M.'

Now I get letters like this (not usually escorted by a mummy case) about thrice a day, and a pretty sum it costs me in stamps to send back the rubbish to the amateur authors. But how could I send back a manuscript to a lady already on her way to Treasure Island?

Here, perhaps, I should explain how Mary Martin, as she signed herself, came to choose *me* for her literary agent. To be sure, total

strangers are always sending me their manuscripts, but Mrs. Martin had actually been introduced to me years before.

I was staying, as it happened, at one of our university towns, which I shall call Oxford, for short—not that that was *really* its name. Walking one day with a niece, a scholar of Lady Betty's Hall, we chanced to meet in the High two rather remarkable persons. One of them was the very prettiest girl I ever saw in my life. Her noble frame marked her as the victor over Girton at lawn-tennis; while her *pince-nez* indicated the student. She reminded me, in the grace of her movements, of the Artemis of the Louvre and the Psyche of Naples, while her thoughtful expression recalled the celebrated 'Reading Girl' of Donatello. Only a reading girl, indeed, could have been, as she was, Reader in English Literature on the Churton Collins Foundation.

'Who is she?' I said to my friend, the scholar of Lady Betty's; 'what a lovely creature she is!'

'Who, *that*?' she replied with some tartness. 'Well, what you can see in *her*, I don't know. That's Leonora O'Dolite, and the lady with her is the Lady Superior of Lady Betty's.

'They call them Pretty and the Proctor,' my friend went on, 'as Mrs. Martin—Polly they call her too—has been Proctor twice.'²

² I say, you know, keep clear of improbabilities! No one was ever old enough to have been Proctor *twice*.
—PUBLISHER.

That's all you know about it. Why, I shall bring in a character old enough to have been Proctor a thousand times.—ED.

Now nobody could have called Polly bewitching. Her age must really have been quite thirty-five. I dislike dwelling on this topic, but she was short, dumpy, wore blue spectacles, a green umbrella, a red and black shawl, worsted mittens and uncompromising boots. She had also the ringlets and other attractions with which French Art adorns its ideal Englishwoman.

At my request, I was introduced; but presently some thirty professors, six or seven senior dons, and a sprinkling of Heads of Houses in red and black sleeves came bounding out of University sermon, and gathered round the lovely Leonora. The master of St. Catherine's was accompanied by a hitherto Unattached student, who manifestly at once fell a victim to Leonora's charms.

This youth was of peculiar aspect. He was a member of the nearly extinct Boshman tribe of Kokoatinaland. His long silky hair, originally black, had been blanched to a permanent and snowy white by failures in the attempt to matriculate at Balliol. He was short—not above four feet nine—and was tattooed all over his dark but intelligent features.

When he was introduced I had my first opportunity of admiring Leonora's extraordinary knowledge of native customs and etiquette.

'Let me present to you,' said the Master of St. Catherine's, 'the Boshman chief, Ustâni!'

'You 'stonish me!' answered Leonora, with a smile that captivated the Boshman. It is a rule among the tribes of Kokoatinaland, and in Africa generally, to greet a new acquaintance with a verbal play on his name.³ Owing to our insular ignorance, and the difficulty of the task, this courtesy had been omitted at Oxford in Ustâni's case, even by the Professors of Comparative Philology and the learned Keeper of the Museum. From that hour to another which struck later, when *he* struck too, Ustâni was Leonora's slave.

³ Is this *bonâ fide*?—PUBLISHER.

All right, see *She* (p. 145), Ayesha's elegant pun on Holly. It's always done—pun, I mean.—ED.

I had no further opportunity of conversing with Leonora and Polly, nor indeed did I ever think of them again, till Polly's letter and mummy case recalled them to my memory.

Perhaps for pretty Leonora's sake I did, after all, take up and open the vast cylindrical roll of MS.⁴ in the mummy case. Dawn found me still reading the following record of unparalleled adventure.⁵

⁴ Don't you think it would stand being cut a little?—PUBLISHER.

We shall see.—ED.

⁵ There is just one thing that puzzles me. Polly and Leonora have gone, no man knows where, and, taking everything into consideration, it may be a good two thousand years before they come back.

Ought I not, then, to invest, *in my own name*, the princely cheque of the Intelligent Publishers?—ED.

CHAPTER II.

POLLY'S NARRATIVE.

I am the plainest woman in England, bar none.⁶ Even in youth I was not, strictly speaking, voluptuously lovely. Short, stumpy, with a fringe like the thatch of a newly evicted cottage, such was my appearance at twenty, and such it remains. Like Cain, I was branded.⁷ But enough of personalities. I had in youth but one friend, a lady of kingly descent (the kings, to be sure, were Irish), and of bewitching loveliness. When she rushed into my lonely rooms, one wild winter night, with a cradle in her arms and a baby in the cradle; when she besought me to teach that infant Hittite, Hebrew, and the Differential Calculus, and to bring it up in college, on commons (where the air is salubrious), what could I do but acquiesce? It is unusual, I know, for a student of my sex, however learned, to educate an infant in college and bring her up on commons. But for once the uncompromising nature of my charms strangled the breath of scandal in the bud, and little Leonora O'Dolite became the darling of the university. The old Keeper of the Bodleian was a crusty bachelor, who liked nothing young but calf, and preferred morocco to *that*. But even *he* loved Leonora. One night the little girl was lost, and only after looking for her in the Hebdomadal Boardroom, in the Sheldonian, the Pusaem, and all the barges, did we find that unprincipled old man amusing her by letting off crackers and Roman-candles among the Mexican MSS. in the Bodleian!

⁶ I may as well say at once that I *will not* be responsible for Polly's style. Sometimes it is flat, they tell me, and sometimes it is flamboyant, whatever they may mean. It is never the least like what one would expect an elderly lady don (or Donna), to write.—ED.

⁷ See *The Mark of Cain* [Arrowsmith], an excellent shillingsworth.—ED.

Is this not 'log rolling'?—PUBLISHER.

These were halcyon hours, happier as Leonora grew up and received the education prescribed for her by her parent. Her Hebrew was fair, and her Hittite up to a first class, but, to my distress, she mainly devoted herself to Celtic studies.

I should tell you that Leonora's chief interest in life was the decipherment of the inscriptions on her cradle—the mummy case which had rocked her ancestors since Abraham's time, and which is now in your possession. Of itself it is a sufficient proof of the accuracy of this narrative. The mummy case is not the ordinary coffin of Egyptian commerce. The hieroglyphics have baffled Dr. Isaac Taylor, and have been variously construed as Chinese, Etruscan, and Basque, by the various professors of these learned lingoës.⁸

⁸ Don't you think this bit is a little dull? The public don't care about dead languages.—PUBLISHER.

Story can't possibly get on without it, as you'll see. You *must* have something of this sort in a romance. Look at Poe's cypher in the *Gold Beetle*, and the chart in *Treasure Island*, and the Portuguese's scroll in *King Solomon's Mines*.—ED.

Now about this mummy case: you must know that it had been in Leonora's family ever since her ancestress, Theodolitê, Pharaoh's daughter, left Egypt, not knowing when she was well off, and settled in Ireland, of all places, where she founded the national prosperity.⁹

⁹ Is not *this* a little steep?—PUBLISHER.

No; it is in all the Irish histories. See Lady Wilde's *Ancient Legends of Ireland*, if you don't believe me.—ED.

The mummy case and a queer ring (see cover) inscribed with a duck, a duck's egg, and an umbrella, were about all that the O'Dolites kept of their ancient property. The older Leonora grew the more deeply she studied the inscriptions on the mummy case. She tried it as Zend, she tried it as Sanskrit, and Japanese, and the American language, and finally she tried it as Irish.

We had a very rainy season that winter even for Oxford, and the more it rained the more Leonora pored over that mummy case. I kept telling her there was nothing in it, but she would not listen to me.

CHAPTER III.

LEONORA'S DISCOVERY.

One wild winter night, when the sleet lashed the pane, my door suddenly opened. I started out of a slumber, and—could I believe my eyes? can history repeat itself?—there stood the friend of my early youth, her eyes ablaze, a cradle in her arms. Was it all coming round again? A moment's reflection showed me that it was *not* my early friend, but her daughter, Leonora.

'Leonora,' I screamed, 'don't tell me that *you*——'

'I have deciphered the inscription,' said the girl proudly, setting down the cradle. The baby had *not* come round.

'Oh, is *that* all?' I replied. 'Let's have a squint at it' (in my case no mere figure of speech).

'What do you call *that*?' said Leonora, handing me the accompanying document.

Garbled letters and symbols

'I call it pie,' said I, using a technical term of typography. 'I can't make head or tail of it,' I said peevishly.

'Well, pie or no pie, I love it like pie, and I've broken the crust,' answered the girl, 'according to my interpretation, which I cannot mistrust.'

'Why?' I asked.

'Because,' she answered; and the response seemed sufficient when mixed with her bright smile.

'It runs thus,' she resumed with severity, 'in the only language *you* can partially understand——'

'It runs thus,' she reiterated, and I could not help saying under such breath as I had left, 'Been running a long time now.'

She frowned and read—

'I, Theodolitê, daughter of a race that has never been run out, did to the magician Jambres, whose skill was even as the skill of the gods, those things which as you have not yet heard I shall now proceed to relate to you.

'Of him, I say, was I jealous, for that he loved a maiden inferior—Oh how inferior!—to me in charms, wit, beauty, intellect, stature, girth, and ancestry. Therefore, being well assured of this, I made the man into a mummy, ere ever his living spirit had left him. What arts I used to this last purpose it boots not, nor do I choose to tell. When I had done this thing I put him secretly away in a fitting box, even as Set concealed Osiris. Then came my maidens and tidied him away, as is the wont of these accursed ones. From that hour, even until now, has no man nor woman known where to find him, even Jambres the magician. For though the mummifying, as thou shalt not fail to discover, was in some sort incomplete, yet the tidying away and the losing were so complete that no putting forth of precious papyri into cupboards beneath flights of stairs has ever equalled it.

'Now, therefore, shall I curse these maidens, even in Amenti, the place of their tormenting.

'Forget them, may they be eternally forgotten.

'Curse them up and down through the whole solar system.'

'This is very violent language, my dear,' said I.

'Our people swore terribly in Egypt,' answered Leonora, calmly.

*'But it is vain, no woman can curse worth a darc.'*¹⁰

'But for this, the losing of the one whom I mummied, must I suffer countless penalties. For I, even the seeress, know not what the said maidens did with the said mummy, nor do you know, nor any other. And not to know, for I want my mummy to have a good cry over, is great part of my punishment. But this I, the seeress, do know right well, for it

was revealed to me in a dream. And this I do prophesy unto thee, my daughter, or daughter's daughter, ay, this do I say, that a curse will rest upon me until He who was mummied shall be found.

'Now this also do I, the seeress, tell thee. He who was mummified shall be found in the dark country, where there is no sun, and men breathe the vapour of smoke, and light lamps at noonday, and wire themselves even with wires when the wind bloweth. And the place where the mummy dwelleth is beneath the Three Balls of Gold. And one will lead thee thither who abides hard by the great tree carven like the head of an Ethiopian. And thou shalt come to the people who slate strangers, and to the place of the Rolling of Logs, and the music thereof.

'Thereafter shalt thou find Him, even Jambres. And when thou hast healed him the Curse shall fall from me!

'Nor, indeed, shall the un mummying be accomplished, even then, unless thou, O my daughter, or my daughter's daughter as before, shalt go with He-who-was-mummied to the Hall of Egyptian Darkness and sit in the Wizard's Chair that is thereby, even the seat which was erst the Siege Perilous. These things have I said, well knowing that they shall be accomplished.

'To thee, my daughter!

'THY GRANDMOTHER.'

¹⁰ From the use of the word *daric* I conjecture that Leonora's ancestress lived under the Persian Empire. There or thereabout.—M. M.

'There, Polly, what do you say to *that*?' said Nora.

'Your grandmother!' I replied.

'Polly!' said Miss Nora, looking at me with quite needlessly flashing eyes, 'you and I will set out on the search for this unhappy mummied one.'

'Don't you think the critics will call the *motive* rather thin?' I demurred.

'Thin, to rescue my ancestress from a curse!' said Leonora.

'There's just one other thing,' she mused. 'Shall we take a low comedy character this time, or not?'

'Let's take Ustâni,' I proposed, 'he can double the part with that of the Faithful Black! A great saving in hotel bills and railway fares.'

CHAPTER IV.

THE EQUIPMENT.

After it had been decided that we should start in search of 'He who had been mummified alive,' the next step seemed to be to go. But Leonora demurred to this.

'We must have our things,' she said; 'what do you think we should take?'

'Scissors,' I replied; and I regret to say that at first she misinterpreted the phrase.

Leonora is a powerful as well as a pretty girl, and when the bear fight that ensued was over my rooms were a little mixed.

This suggested mixed biscuits, that invaluable refreshment of the traveller, and from one thing to another we soon made up a complete list of our needs.

The scissors, and skates, and the soap we procured at the Church and State stores,¹¹ but not, of course, the revolvers. The revolvers we got of the genuine Government pattern, because both Leonora and I are dreadfully afraid of fire-arms, and we knew that *these*, anyhow, would not 'go off.' The jam we got, of course, at the official cartridge emporium, same which we did *not* shoot the Arabs. The Gladstone bag and the Bryant & May's matches we procured direct from the makers, resisting the piteous appeals of itinerant vendors. Some life-belts we laid in, and, as will presently be seen, we could have made no more judicious purchase.

¹¹ Won't the critics say you are advertising the stores? And the tradesmen won't like it.—PUBLISHER.

Where would the *stern reality* of the story be (see *Spectator*), and the contrast with the later goings on, if you didn't give names?—ED.

As, from information received on a mummy case, we were travelling in search of a mummy, of course we laid in a case of Mumm, which was often a source of gaiety in our darkest hours. The wine was procured, as I would advise every African traveller to do, from Messrs. ——. ¹²

¹² Messrs. Who? Printers in a hurry.—PUBLISHER.

Suppressed the name. Messrs. — gave an impolite response to our suggestions as to mutual arrangements. —ED.

Being acquainted with the deleterious effects of a malarious tropical atmosphere, we secured a pair of overalls, advertised as sovran for 'all-overishness,' the dreaded curse of an African climate. These we got at the celebrated emporium of Messrs. ——. ¹³

¹³ Name suppressed. When eligible opportunity for advertisement as a substitute for a cheque was hinted at, Messrs. — brusquely replied, in the low Essex *patois*, 'Wadyermean?'

Our preparations being now exhaustively completed, Leonora and I returned to Oxford, packed our things, and consulted as to the route which we should adopt.

CHAPTER V.

DOWN THE DARK RIVER.

Down the Dark River, the mystic Isis, so Leonora had decided, we sped: Ustâni plying the long pole of the dhow, or native flat-bottomed boat, while we took it in turns to keep him up to his work by flicking him with a tandem-whip.

The moon went slowly down, and it occurred to Leonora to remark that we were 'going down' too, an unusual thing so early in term. Like some sweet bride into her chamber the moon departed, and the quivering footsteps of the Don¹⁴ shook the planets from their places, to the consternation of the Savilian Professor of Astronomy, who, as in duty bound, was contemplating these revolutionary performances from the observatory in the Parks. A number of moral ideas occurred to Leonora and myself, but out of regard for Ustâni's feelings we denied them expression. I began, indeed, to utter a few appropriate sentiments, but the poor Boshman exclaimed, 'You floggee, floggee, Missy, or preachee, preachee, but no *both* floggee and preachee—' in a tone that would have disarmed a Bampton lecturer.

¹⁴ Do you mean the Dawn?—PUBLISHER.

Every Oxford man knows what I mean.—Ed.

Down we drifted, ever downwards, obedient to the inscrutable laws of the equilibrium of fluids. Now we swept past the White Willow, now through the cruel crawling waters of the Gut, now threaded the calamitous gorge of Iffley, and then shot the perilous cataract of Sandford.

At this moment, just when the dhow was yet quivering with the strain, I noticed an expression of abject fear on the face of Ustâni. His dark countenance was positively blanched with horror, and his teeth chattered.

'Silence, chatterbox!' I cried, querulously perhaps, when he laid down his pole and seated himself in an attitude of despair.

'What's the matter, old boy?' asked Leonora, and the reply came in faltering accents—

'*The Ama Barghîs!*'¹⁵

¹⁵ *Ama* is the prefix of all the tribal names; Ama Zulu, Ama Hagger. I connect it with the Greek preposition $\alpha\mu\alpha$.
—Ed.

Don't keep hammer hammering away at Greek! This is a boy's book, not a holiday task, this is!—PUBLISHER.

We glanced in terror down the river's edge.

There, on the path trodden by so many millions of feet that now are silent,¹⁶ there were the burly forms of five or six splendid savages.

¹⁶ *Please* don't begin moralising again. One never knows when it will come upon you.—PUBLISHER.

Couldn't help just throwing it in.—Ed.

The character of their language—which was borne to us on the pure breeze of morning—their costume, their floating house, in which these scourges of the water highway commonly reside—everything combined to demonstrate that they belonged to the Barghîz, the most powerful and most dreaded of the native populations.

'*Me umslopogey,*' whispered Ustâni in his native language, meaning that he would retreat.

'Eyes in the boat,' cried Leonora, in her clear, commanding tones; 'paddle on all!'

The Boshman, cowed by her aspect, and the mere slave of discipline (he had pulled in the St. Catherine's second torpid), obeyed her command, and presently we were abreast of the Barghîz.

'Hi, Miss,' cried the Barghî chief, a man of colossal stature, 'Can't yer look where yer a shovin' to?'

Though his words were unintelligible, his tone was insulting.

Leonora rose to her feet, and to the occasion.

By virtue of her rare acquaintance with savage customs, she was able to taunt the Barghîz with the horrors of their tribal mystery, to

divulge which is *Death!*

She openly insulted the secret orgies of the tribe.

She denounced the Dog-Feast!

'WHO ATE THE PUPPY PIE UNDER MARLOWE BRIDGE?' shrilled Leonora in her proud sweet young voice.

In a moment a shower of stones struck the dhow, and spurred the water into storm. Frank Muller, the Barghî chief, distinguished himself by the fury of his imprecations and the accuracy of his aim. A smothered groan told me that Ustâni had been hit in the mouth.

Whid, whad, crash went the stones, while Leonora plied the pole with desperate energy, and I erected the patent reversible umbrellas with which we were provided to catch any breath of favourable wind.

The fierce rapidity of the stream finally carried us out of the reach of the infuriated Barghîz (who, moreover, were providentially slain by lightning—a common enough occurrence in that favoured climate, where nobody thinks anything of it), and we rested, weary and wounded, in a sheltered backwater.¹⁷

¹⁷ Are you not gliding insensibly into *Bess*?—PUBLISHER.

No; all right. It is a tremendous country for storms; can't use them too often; adds to the sense of reality.—Ed.

'The dhow's looking rather dowdy,' said Leonora, glancing at the shattered craft.

'If doughty deeds my lady please,' said I, catching her light tone, 'why, she must take the consequences. But, Leonora,' I added, shuddering, 'I'm sure my feet are damp.'

If there is one thing I dread it is damp feet.

'No wonder,' said Leonora, calmly. 'The dhow has sprung a leak.'

I searched the dhow everywhere, but could find no trace of the vegetable.

Meanwhile the water had risen above the capstan, and Ustâni, shivering audibly, had perched himself on the bowsprit.

'Now or never,' said Leonora, 'is the moment for our life-belts.'

We hurriedly put on our life-belts, regretting the absence of an experienced maid.

'I'll be Mrs. Lecks, and you'll be Mrs. Aleshine!' laughed Leonora, as the dhow, shuddering in all her timbers, collapsed.

'*Ego et Lecks mea!*' cried I, not to seem deficient in opportune gaiety of allusion, and we were in the water. We advanced briskly down stream, Ustâni propelling himself with the pole of the dhow.

Ever anxious about Ustâni's University education (interrupted by this expedition), Leonora kept 'coaching' him in the usual way.

'Bow, you're feathering under water,' she exclaimed, when the unfortunate Ustâni disappeared in a lasher, where we, thanks to our life-belts, floated gaily enough.

Here we paused to catch a few of the perch and gudgeons, which Leonora had attracted by carefully wearing white stockings.

'Nothing like white stockings for perch,' she said.

As there were not perch enough to go round, Ustâni was told to content himself with the pole, a synonym, if not an equivalent.

Laying our trencher-caps on the water, we used them, as of old, for trenchers, and made an excellent meal.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ZÛ.

Our course was now through a series of cross streams, and finally we emerged into a long, perfectly straight, and perfectly tranquil expanse of water, bordered by a path which had every appearance of having been made by the hand of man.

Night fell: a strange, murky night, smelling of lucifer matches, and lit on the eastern horizon by a mysterious light, flaring like a dreary dawn.

Our passage was obstructed by a thousand obstacles, and at one point we plunged into the very bowels of the earth for a distance of at least a quarter of a mile. Next we found the canal barred by a grinning row of black iron teeth, under which we dived as best we might. We were now, Ustâni whispered to us, within the strange and dreaded region known to the superstitious natives as *the Zû*. For the first time in our expedition we heard the roaring of innumerable wild beasts. The rattling trumpet of the elephant, the drum of the gorilla, the scream of the lion, the chattering of countless apes, the yells of myriads of cockatoos, the growls of bears, the sobs of walri,¹⁸ the whistle of rhinoceroses, combined to make a strange pandemonium—strange, I call it, because the zoological learning I had picked up while with Nora at Oxford, informed me at once that the variety of roars, screams, grunts, skreeks, whirrings, which our footsteps seemed to awake in every kind of animal, bird, and insect, could be paralleled only in the pages of the 'Swiss Family Robinson.' Add to this, that it was *night*, yet dark as a day on the London flags when the fog creeps silently about your feet and, rising from utter blackness, grows white and whiter in its ascent, till it coils round your neck, a white choker!

¹⁸ Is this plural correct?—PUBLISHER.

I can't find walrus in the Latin dictionary nor anything else beginning with W somehow, but it *seems* all right.—ED.

Yes, the fog was playing a dark game, but Nora could see it and go one lighter (there were several on the stream we had quitted). She produced a patent electric light.¹⁹ Aided by this, we looked about us and saw the strange denizens of the Zû.

¹⁹ Patent in the first sense of the word. She has not yet received offers advantageous enough to close with in the other sense.

It was now that the presence of mind of Leonora saved us. Foreseeing the probability of an encounter with wild beasts, she had filled her practicable pocket (she belonged to the Rational Dress Association) with buns and ginger-bread nuts.

The elephant now walked round, the wolves also circulated, the bear climbed his pole, the great gorilla beat his breast and roared.

Leonora was their match.

For the elephant she had a rusk, a bun for the bear, and the gorilla was pacified by an offering of nuts from his native Brazil.

THIS WAY TO THE CROCODILE HOUSE

we now read, on an inscription in black letters, and, following the path indicated, we reached the dank tank where the monsters dwell. We had arrived at a place which I find it difficult to describe. The floor was smooth and hard.

'What do you make of *this*?' asked Leonora, tapping her dainty foot on the floor.

'Flags,' I replied phlegmatically, and she was silent.

In the centre of the space was a dark pool, circled by crystalline palaces inhabited by the sacred snakes, from huge pythons to the terrapin proud of his tureen. Again, there was a whipsnake, and a toad, bloated as the aristocracy of old time, and puffed up as the plutocracy of to-day. For such is the lot of toads!

Now a strange thing happened.

'*Hark!*' said Ustâni; '*hark! hark! hark!* a den is opening!'

He was right; it was the den of a catawampuss, an animal whose habits are so well known that I need not delay to describe them.

In the centre of the dark pool in the middle of the vague space lay one crocodile. The rest were sleeping on the banks. The catawampuss secretly emerged from its den—horror, I am not ashamed to say, prevented me from interfering—stealthily crept across the cold floor, and, true to the instincts of all the feline tribe,²⁰ made straight for the water.

Is the catawampuss one of the Felidæ?—PUBLISHER.

Of course he is. Look at his name!—Ed.

'Ah!' cried Ustâni, 'he's going for him!'

The expression was ambiguous, but we understood it.

The catawampuss, cunning as the dread jerboa, crept to the edge of the pool, took a header into it, and then, still true to the feline instincts, *swimming on its back*, made its way to the crocodile. In this manner it caught the crocodile by the tail and waked it. When the tail of a crocodile awakes the head awakes also. The crocodile's head, then, waking as the catawampuss seized its tail, caught the tail of the catawampuss. The interview was hurried and tumultuous.

The crocodile had one of his ears chewed off (first blood for the catawampuss), but this was a mere temporary advantage. When next we saw clearly through the tempest of flying fur and scales, the head of the catawampuss *had entirely disappeared*, and the animal was clearly much distressed.

Then, all of a sudden, the end came.

They had swallowed each other!

Not a vestige of either was left!

This duel was a wonderful and shocking sight, and was therefore withdrawn, by request, as the patrons of the Gardens are directly interested in the morality of the establishment.

CHAPTER VII.

AMONG THE LO-GROLLAS.

How to escape from our perilous position on the banks of a pestilential stream, haunted by catawampodes and other fell birds of prey, now became a subject for consideration. Our object, of course, was to reach the people of the Lo-grollas, through whose region, according to the prophecy, we must pass before finding the Magician that should guide us to the mummy. Our perplexity was only increased by the discovery that we were surrounded on every side by the walls and houses of a gigantic city. Stealing out by the canal as we had entered, we found to our comfort that this must be the very city mentioned by Theodolitê. As the seeress had declared, a deep and noisome night always prevailed, only broken here and there as a wanderer scratched one of Bryant & May's matches and painfully endeavoured to decipher the number on the door of his house. The streets, moreover, were strewn and interwoven with long strings of iron fallen from the sky.

'The people who wire themselves with wires,' whispered Leonora; 'what do you think of my interpretation *now?*'

'I shall inquire,' I answered, and I *did* inquire for the land of the Lo-grollas, but in vain.

Happily we chanced to meet an old man, clothed in a whitish robe of some unknown substance, not unlike paper. This fluttering vesture was marked with strange characters, in black and red, which Leonora was able to interpret. She read them thus. They were but fragmentary.

More garbled letters and symbols

On the fragments the words, 'Tragedy,' 'Awful Revelations,' 'Purity,' and other apparently inconsistent hieroglyphics might be deciphered.

He had a large and ragged staff; on his back he carried a vast Budget, and he was always asking everybody, 'Won't you put something in the Budget?'

'Father,' said Leonora, in a respectful tone, 'canst thou tell us the way to the land of the people called Lo-grolla, and the place of the Rolling of Logs.'

He stroked his beautiful white beard, and smiled faintly.

'Indeed, child, we not only know it, but ourselves discovered it and wrote it up—we mean, sent our representative,' he answered.

It was a peculiarity of this man that he always spoke, like royalty, in the first person plural.

'And if a daughter may ask,' said Leonora, 'what is the name of my father?'

Stedfastly regarding her, he answered, 'Our name is Pellmelli.'

'And whither go we, my father?'

'That you shall see—as soon, that is, as the fog lifts, or as our representative has made interest with a gas company.'

With these words he furnished an unequalled supply of litter, which came, he said, 'from the office,' where there was plenty, and we were borne rapidly in a westward direction.

As we journeyed, old Pellmelli gave us a good deal of information about the Lo-grollas, whom he did not seem to like.

They were, he said, a savage and treacherous tribe, inhabiting for the most part the ruined abodes of some kingly race of old.

The names of their chief dwellings, he told us, were still called, in some ancient and long-lost speech,

'The Academy,' and 'The Athenæum.'

Leonora, whose knowledge of languages was extensive and peculiar, told Pellmelli that these names were derived from the old Greek.

'Ah,' said he, 'you have clearly drunk of the wisdom of the past, and thy hands have held the water of the world's knowledge. Know you Latin also?'

'Yes, O Pellmelli,' replied Leonora, and Pellmelli said he preferred modern tongues, though it would often be useful to him if he did in his dealings with the Lo-grollas.

'However, if our Greek is a little to seek, our Russian is O.K.,' he said proudly.

He was very bitter against the Lo-grollas.

The Lo-grollas' favourite weapon, he told us, was the club, and he even proposed to show us this instrument.

Our litter presently stopped outside a stately palace.

The street was dark, as always in this strange city, but old Pellmelli paused, sniffed, and, bending his ear to the ground, listened intently.

'I smell the incense,' he said, 'and hear the melodious Rolling of the Logs. But they shall know their master!'

Thus speaking, he led us into a vast hall, where the Lo-grollas were sitting or standing, 'offering each other incense,' as Pellmelli remarked, from thin tubes of paper, which smoked at one end.

'Now listen,' said Pellmelli, and he cried aloud the name of a poet known to the Lo-grollas.

Instantly we heard, from I know not what recess, a rolling fire of applause and admiration, which swept past us with stately and solemn music, like a hymn of praise.

'*There*,' said Pellmelli, 'I told you so. This is the place of the Rolling of Logs, and yourselves have heard it.'

Leonora said she did not mind how often she heard it, as she quite agreed with the sentiments.

'Not so!' said Pellmelli; and he cried aloud another name—the name of a poetaster—which was almost strange to us.

Then followed through that vasty hall a sharp and rattling crash, as of the descent of innumerable slates.

'Great heavens!' whispered Leonora, 'remember the writing; *the place where they slate strangers!*'

As we were strangers, and wholly unknown to the Lo-grollas, we thought they might slate *us*, and, beating a hasty retreat, soon found ourselves with Pellmelli in the dark outer air.

'They are a desperate lot,' said he; 'they won't ever put anything in the Budget.'

He was quivering with indignation; and Leonora, to soothe him, told him the story of our quest for the mummy, and asked him if he could help us.

'We are your man,' said he. 'We propose to-morrow to send our representative to interview a magician who has just arrived in this country. He is a mysterious character; his name is Asher,²¹ and it is said that he is the Wandering Jew, or, at all events, has lived for many centuries. He, if any one, can direct you in your search.'

²¹ Pronounced *Assha*.—ED.

He then appointed a place where his representative should meet us next day, and we separated, Pellmelli taking his staff, and going off to lead an excursion against the Ama-Tory, a brutal and licentious tribe.

CHAPTER VIII.

HE.

Next day Leonora was suffering from a slight feverish cold, and I don't wonder at it considering what we suffered in the Zû. I therefore went alone to the rendezvous where I was to meet 'our representative.'

To my surprise, nobody was there but old Pellmelli himself.

'Why, you said you would send your representative!' I exclaimed.

'We are our usual representative,' he answered rather sulkily. 'Come on, for we have to call on Messrs. Apples, the famous advertisers.'

'Why?' said I.

'Can you ask?' he replied. 'Can aught be more interesting than an advertiser?'

'I call it log rolling,' I answered; but he was silent.

He went at a great pace, and presently, in a somewhat sordid street, pointed his finger silently to an object over a door.

It was the carved head of an Ethiopian!

This new confirmation of the prophecy gave me quite a turn, especially when I read the characters inscribed beneath—

TRY OUR FINE NEGRO'S HEAD!

'Here dwells the sorcerer, even Asher,' said Pellmelli, and began to crawl upstairs on his hands and knees.

'Why do you do that?' I asked, determined, if I must follow Pellmelli, at all events not to follow his example.

'It is the manner of the tribe of Interviewers, my daughter. Ours is a blessed task, yet must we feign humility, or the savage people kick us and drive us forth with our garments rent.'

He now humbly tapped at a door, and a strange voice cried,

'Entrez!'

Pellmelli (whose Russian is his strong point) paused in doubt, but I explained that the word was French for 'come in.'

He crawled in on his stomach, while I followed him erect, and we found ourselves before a strange kind of tent. It had four posts, and a brodered veil was drawn all round it.

Within the veil the sorcerer was concealed, and he asked in a gruff tone,

'Wadyerwant?'

Pellmelli explained that he had come to receive a brief personal statement for the Budget.

The Voice replied, without hesitation, 'The Centuries and the Æons pass, and I too make the pass. *Je saute la coupe*,' he added, in a foreign tongue. 'While thy race wore naught but a little blue paint, I dwelt among the forgotten peoples. The Red Sea knows me, and the Nile has turned scarlet at my words. I am Khoot Hoomi, I am also the Chela of the Mountain!'

'Now it is my turn to ask *you* a few easy questions.

'Who sitteth on the throne of Hokey, Pokey, Winky Wum, the Monarch of the Anthropophagi?

'Have the Jews yet come to their land, or have the owners of the land gone to the Jews?

'Doth Darius the Mede yet rule, or hath his kingdom passed to the Bassarids?'

As Pellmelli was utterly floored by these inquiries (which indicated that the sorcerer had been for a considerable time out of the range of the daily papers), I answered them as well as I could.

When his very natural curiosity had been satisfied by a course of Mangnall's Questions, I ventured to broach my own business.

He said he did not deal in mummies himself, though he had a stuffed crocodile very much at my service; but would I call to-morrow, and bring Leonora? He added that he had known of our coming by virtue of his secret art of divination. 'And thyself,' he added, 'shalt gaze without extra charge in the Fountain of Knowledge.'

Thrusting a withered yellow hand out of the mystic tent, he pointed to a table where stood a small circular dish or cup of white earthenware, containing some brown milky liquid.

'Gaze therein!' said the sorcerer.

I gazed—*There was a Stranger in the tea!*

Deeply impressed with the belief (laugh at it if you will) that I was in the presence of a being of more than mortal endowments, I was withdrawing, when my glance fell on his weird familiars,—two tailless cats. This prodigy made me shudder, and I said, in tones of the deepest awe and sympathy, 'Poor puss!'

'Yes,' came the strange voice from within the tent, 'they are *born* without tails. I bred them so; it hath taken many centuries and much trouble, but at last I have triumphed. Once, too, I reared a breed of dogs with two tails, but after a while they became a proverb for pride; Nature loathed them, and they perished. Χαῖρε! *Vale!*'²²

²² I have consulted the authorities at the British Museum, who tell me these are the Greek and the Latin words for 'Don't you think you had better go? Get out!'—ED.

This, though not understood, of course, by Pellmelli, was as good as an invitation to withdraw, so I induced the old man to come away, promising the magician I would return on the morrow.

Who was this awful man, to whom centuries were as moments, whose very correspondence, as I had noticed, came through the Dead Letter Office, and who spoke in the tongues of the dead past?

CHAPTER IX.

THE POWER OF HE.

Next day Leonora, the Boshman, and I returned to the home of the mage. He stood before us, a tall thin figure enwrapped in yellowish, strange garments, of a singular and perfumed character—spicy in fact—which produced upon me a feeling which I cannot attempt to describe, and which I can only vaguely hint at by saying that the whole form conveyed to me the notion of *something wrapped up*.²³

²³ The public will say, so is your meaning.—PUBLISHER.

Don't give it away, but that's what I mean.—ED.

With a curious swaying motion which I have never seen anything like—for he seemed less to be walking than to be impelled from behind like a perambulator, or dragged from in front like a canal-boat—he advanced to the table, where lay some pieces of a white substance like papyrus, all of the same size and oblong shape, which showed on their surfaces, some of them antique-looking figures and faces curiously stained, and others red and black dots, arranged, as it seemed to me, in some sort of design, although at first sight they looked jumbled enough. Near to these lay a book bound in brown, but with heavy black and gold lettering, amid which I thought I could make out the words *Modern Magic*, and the name *Hoffmann*. The swathed figure poised itself a moment, resting one thin hand on the table, and then spoke.

'There is naught that is wonderful about this matter,' it said, 'could you but understand it. Prestigation itself is wonderful, but that its phases and phrases should be changed is not wonderful. Not now, I ween, is the *gibecière* of the Ancient Wizard seen; not now the "Presto, pass!" of the less ancient conjurer heard. Nay, all things change, yet I change not; that which is not yet cannot yet have taken place—at least not its proper place; that which shall not be may yet come to a bad pass, and the blind race of man watches helpless the trammels it could shake off did it but greatly dare. My business, ladies and gentlemen, now is, as I have just explained to you, to attempt to puzzle your eyes by the quickness of my fingers. Yours, on the other hand, will be to detect the way—or *modus operandi*, as old Simon Magus used to say—in which I perform my little wonders—if you can. Will any gentleman lend me a helmet—I mean a hat?'

As the only male person present was the Boshman, this appeared to me a futile question, and even the stately Magician seemed to be struck by some dim idea of the kind, for I could discern a pair of mysterious eyes peering anxiously through his swathings, and I heard him mutter to himself in several languages, 'Ought to have thought of that. No hat present. Don't know any trick to produce one. Nothing about it in the book.'

But he recovered himself quickly, and went on in clear cheerful tones, 'Ladies and gentlemen, as no person present has a hat, I will proceed to another of the tricks on my little programme. Will any lady oblige me by drawing a card? Will you, madam?' he said, bowing with infinite grace to Leonora.

Her hand touched Asher's as she drew a card, and I saw a shiver pass over the veiled figure.

'Will the lady on your left now oblige me?' he continued, turning to me, who was indeed standing on Leonora's left hand, though how he knew it is a thing I have never been able fully to understand.

'Now, please,' he continued, 'look well at your cards, but do not show them to me or to each other. *Basta. Assez. Κογξ Ομπαξ*. Now, please, still hiding the cards from me and from each other, exchange them. Now,' he continued, his form dilating with conscious power, 'see how true is it that change is perennial, even so far as magic and Nature herself can be perennial. For she who held the King of Hearts now holds the Queen of Spades, and she who held the Queen of Spades now holds the King of Hearts. Thus much among the shifting shadows of life can I, the wizard, see as a sure and accomplished fact. Is it not so, my children?'

We bowed in silence, overawed by the wonder of his presence, although Leonora whispered to me, 'He has got the cards wrong, but we had better say nothing about it.'

'And now,' he continued, 'look upon this glass (it was an ordinary wineglass) and on this silver coin,' producing a *stater* of the Eretrian Republic. 'See! I place the coin in the glass, and now can I tell you by its means what you will of the future. There is no magic in it, only a little knowledge of the secrets, mutable yet immutable, of Nature. And this is an old secret. I did not find it. It was known of yore in Atlantis and in Chichimec, in Ur and in Lycosura. Even now the rude Boshmen keep up the tradition among their medicine-men. Will any lady ask the coin a question?' he continued, in a hoarse Semitic whisper, for all currencies and all languages were alike to him. 'Sure it's the coin 'll be afther tellun' ye what ye like. *Voulez-vous demander, Mademoiselle? Wollen Sie, gnädige Signora?*

'Then,' said Leonora, in trembling accents, 'I demand to know if I shall find that which I seek.'

The figure, drawing itself up to its full height, passed its hand with a proud, impatient, and mystic gesture across the glass, and then stood in the attitude of one who awaited a response. 'Should the coin, my daughter, jump three times,' he said, 'the answer is yea. Should it jump but once, nay.'

We waited anxiously. The coin did not jump at all! The wizard took up the glass, shook it impatiently, and put it down again. Still the coin showed no sign of animation. Then the wizard uttered some private ejaculations in Hittite, but still the coin did not move. Then he affected an air of jauntiness, and said, 'I remember a circumstance of a similar kind when I was playing odd man out (τρίος άνθρωπος dear old Sokrates used to call it) with Darius the night before Marathon. Darius was the Mede. *I* was the Medium.' Then he seemed about to work another wonder, when he was interrupted by the harsh cackling laughter of the Boshman, who advanced with careless defiance and observed in his own tongue, which we all knew perfectly, that he 'could see all the tricks the wizard could do and go several better.' I waited, horror-struck, to see what would follow this insolence.

Asher made a movement so swift that I could scarcely follow it; but it seemed to me that he lightly laid his hand upon the poor Boshman's head. I looked at Ustâni, and then staggered back in wonder, for there upon his snowy hair, right across the wool-white tresses, were five finger-marks *black as coal*.

'Now go and stand in the corner,' said the magician, in a cold inhuman voice. The unhappy Boshman tremblingly did his bidding, putting his hands to his head in a dazed way as he went, and, incredible as it may seem, thus transferring—as if the curse carried double force—some of the black mark to his own fingers.

'I will now,' continued the wizard, who had regained his ordinary polished, if somewhat swaying and overbalanced, manner—'I will now, with your kind permission, show you a little trick which was a great favourite with the late Tubal Cain when we were boys together. Observe, I take this paper-knife—it is an ordinary paper-knife—look at it for yourselves. I will place it on my down-turned hand. It is an ordinary hand—look at it for yourselves, but don't touch it; the consequences might be disastrous.'

I, for my part, having seen the consequences in the case of Ustâni's hair, had no desire to do so.

'You see,' continued the sorcerer, 'I place the paper-knife *there*! It falls. Why? Because of gravity. What is gravity? Newton, as you know well, invented the art; but what of that? Did he find that which did not exist? No, for the non-existent is as though it had never been. But now, availing myself of the resources of science, which is ever old and ever young, I clasp my wrist—the wrist of the hand on which the paper-knife rests—with the other hand, and—you see.'

As the sorcerer spoke, he deftly turned his hand palm downwards, and the paper-knife fell with a crash and a clatter on the floor. It was terrible to see the dumb wrath of the swathed figure at this new defeat.

Even in this moment the Boshman glided like a serpent among us, picked up the paper-knife, and triumphantly performed the very miracle in which the wizard had failed. A harsh cackle of laughter announced his success. But the mage was even with him, or rather he was 'odds and evens.' Rapidly he drew his forefinger across the Boshman's face, perpendicularly and horizontally—

A tic-tac-toe grid

On the skin of Ustâni, azure with terror, appeared the above diagram in lines of white! The mage then made the sign of a +, thus—

A tic-tac-toe grid with a plus sign in the upper right corner

and challenged Leonora to a contest of skill in 'oughts and crosses.' But the Boshman, catching a view of his own altered aspect in a mirror, exclaimed, 'You 'standy Ustâni? Him no standy He! Him show hisself for tin! Adults one shilling, kids tizzy. *Me Umslopogvey!*' And he sloped; nor did we ever again see this victim of an overwhelming Power (limited).

We presently took our leave of the mage, promising to call next day, and bring a policeman.

CHAPTER X.

A BODY IN PAWN.

'Gin a body meet a body!'—BURNS.

Though Leonora's faith in the magician had been a good deal shaken by his failures in his black art, she admitted that, as a clairvoyant, he might be more inspired. We therefore went, as he had directed us, to the neighbourhood of Clare Market, where he had prophesied that we should find a Temple adorned with the Three Balls of Gold, which the Lombards bore with them from their far Aryan home in Frangipani. Nor did this part of the prophecy fail to coincide with the document on the mummy case. Through the thick and choking darkness which has made 'The Lights of London' a proverb, we beheld the glittering of three aureate orbs. And now, how to win our way, without pass-word or, indeed, pass-book, into this home of mystery?

Here, in these immemorial recesses, the natives had long been wont to bury, as we learned, their oldest objects of interest and value. There, when we pushed our way within the swinging portal, lay around us, in vast and solemn pyramids of portable property, the silent and touching monuments of human existence. The busy life of a nation lay sleeping here! Here, for example, stood that ancestral instrument for the reckoning of winged Time, which in the native language is styled a 'Grandfather's Clock.' Hard by lay the pipe, fashioned of the 'foam of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn,' the pipe on which, perchance, some swain had discoursed sweet music near the shady heights of High Holborn. The cradle of infancy, the gamp of decrepitude, the tricycle of fleeting youth, the paraffin lamp which had lighted bridal gaiety, the flask which had held the foaming malt,—all were gathered here, and the dust lay deep on all of them!

I was about to make some appropriate moral remarks, when I heard Leonora (whose command of tongues is simply *marvellous*) address an attendant priestess in the local dialect.

'Here, miss,' said she, 'ow much can yer let us 'ave on this 'ere ticker?' (producing her watch).

The priestess, whose clear-cut features and two lovely black eyes betrayed a mixture of Semitic blood, was examining the 'turnip'—as she called the watch—when Leonora, saying 'Mum's the word,' rather violently called my attention (with her elbow) to a strange parcel lying apart from the rest.

It was a long bundle, as long as a man, and was swathed in cerements of white Egyptian tissue.

"Tis you! 'tis you!" I sneezed rapturously, recognising the object of our search, the very mummy which, two thousand years ago, Theodolitê had prepared with her own fair but cruel hands.

There, beyond the shadow of doubt, lay all that was mortal of the unlucky Jambres! On the tissue which wrapped the bundle I distinctly recognised *the stencilled mark corresponding to Leonora's scarab*, a duck, the egg of a duck, and an umbrella.²⁴

²⁴ See cover. Most important to have this cover bound in *sur brochure*.—PUBLISHER.

'How much,' said I to the priestess of the temple, 'could you afford to let me have that old bundle of rags for?'

'That old bundle of rags?' said the woman, 'Take it, dear lady, take it and keep it (if you can), and the blessing of Abraham be on your head!'

So anxious was she to part with the mummy that we could hardly get her to accept a merely nominal price. To give plausibility to the purchase, we said we wanted the rags for a paper-mill. Joyously did Leonora and I call a passing chariot, and, with the mummy between us, we drove to our abode. I was surprised on the way by receiving a pettish push from Leonora's foot.

'Don't tread on my toes,' she said, though I had not even stirred. I told her as much, and we were getting a little animated when my bonnet was twitched off and thrown out into the darkness.

'Leonora,' I said severely, 'these manners are unworthy of a lady!'

'I declare, my dear Polly,' she replied, 'that I never even moved!' and as she was obviously in earnest I had to accept her word.

When we reached home, after a series of petty but provoking accidents,²⁵ we first locked up the mummy very carefully in the spare bedroom. To-morrow would be time enough, we said, to consult the wizard as to our next movement. We ordered a repast of the native viands (which included, I remember, a small but savoury fish, the Blô-ta), and sought our couches, in better spirits than usual.

²⁵

I say, are you not gliding insensibly into *The Fallen Idol*?—PUBLISHER.

Not a bit, you wait and you'll see.—ED.

Next morning, long before Leonora was awake, the young but intelligent Slavî (so the common people call housemaids) crept into my chamber with a death-white face.

'Ômum,' she said (it is a term of courtesy), 'wot a night we've been having?'

'Why, what is the matter, Jemimaran?' I asked, for that was her melodious native name.

'There's *something* in the spare room, mum, a-carrying on horful. The bell ringing all night, and the Thing screaming and walking up and down as restless! I'm a-going to give warning, mum,' she added confidentially.

'Why, you've *given* it,' I said, to reassure her. 'Forewarned is forearmed.'

'Four-legged It do run sometimes, like a beast, mum, wailing terrible. Up and down, up and down It goes, and always ringing the bell, and crying high for a brandy-and-soda, mum, like a creature tormented.'²⁶

²⁶

Do take care. This is copyright! Don't you remember Mr. Hyde?—PUBLISHER.

Neither Hyde nor Hidol, you're so nervous. Do wait till the end.—ED.

Wish it was come!—PUBLISHER.

'Well,' I asked, though every hair upon my head stood erect with horror (adding greatly to the peculiarity of my appearance), 'well, did you take It what It asked for?'

'Yes, mum; for very fear I dared not refuse. And when I had handed it in by a chink in the open door, first there was a sound like drinking, then an awful cry, "Potash again!" and then a heavy soft thud, as if you had knocked over a bolster stuffed with lead, mum.'

Through the brown glimmer of dawn (it was about ten A.M.) I hurried to Leonora's chamber. She was dressed, and came out. 'What do you advise?' I asked.

'Send for Mr. Urmson, the eminent lawyer, at once,' said she, 'he is used to this kind of thing. Nothing like taking Counsel's opinion. But first let me knock the door open!' She applied her magnificent white shoulder to the door, which flew into splinters.

There was not a trace of the mummy, but there, in a deprecatory attitude, stood the philosopher Asher!²⁷

²⁷

Please pronounce *Assha*.—ED.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WIZARD UNBOSOMS.

'Sir,' said Leonora, 'may I request you to inform me why we find you, rampaging an unbidden guest, in the chamber which is sacred to hospitality?'

Τὴν δ' ἀπαμβομενος προσεΦη κορυθαίολος Asher,' answered the magician, dreamily. 'Do my senses deceive me, or—that voice, that winsome bearing—am I once more with Helen on the walls of Ilion?'

'No, sir, you are in 30 Acacia Gardens,' replied Leonora, severely. 'Why, permit me to repeat myself, do I find you here, an unbidden guest?'

'To say that I never guessed you'd find me here,' answered the magician, 'might seem a mere trifling with language and with your feelings.'

'My feelings!' exclaimed the proud girl, indignantly, 'just as if—— But answer me!'

'When a man has seen as much of life as I have,' answered the magician, 'when the Æons are to him merely as drops in a bucket which he will never kick—and when he suffers,' he added mournfully, 'from attacks of multiplex personality, he recognises the futility of personal explanations.'

'At least I can compel you to tell us *Where is the mummy?*' said Leonora.

'I am, or lately was, that mummy,' said the wizard, haughtily; then, drawing himself up to his full height, he added, 'I am the REAL JAMBRES! Old Gooseberry Jamberries,' he added solemnly. 'No other is genuine!'

'You are playing, sir, on our credulity,' replied the girl; 'no living man can be a mummy,—outside of the House of Lords or the Royal Academy.'

'You speak,' he said tenderly, 'with the haste of youth and inexperience. When you have lived as long as I have, you will know better. Harken to my story.

'Three or four thousand years ago—for what is time?—I was the authorised magician at the Court of Ptolemy Patriarchus. I had a rival—the noted witch Theodolitê. In an evil hour she won me by a show of false affection, and, taking advantage of my passion, mummified me alive. To this I owe my remarkable state of preservation at an advanced age. *Très bien conservé*,' he added fatuously.

'But she only half accomplished her purpose. By some accident, which has never been explained, and in spite of the stress of competition, she had purchased *pure* salts of potash for the execution of her fell purpose in place of *adulterated* salts of soda.

'To this I owe it that I am now a living man; and in a moment——'

A certain stiffness of demeanour, which we had noticed, but ascribed to pride, worked an unspeakable change in the mage. As we looked at him *he hardened into our cheap mummy*.

'Here's a jolly go!' said Leonora, her mind submerged in terror.

I sprang to the bell, '*Soda water at once!*' I cried, and the *slavî* appeared with the fluid. We applied it to the parched lips of the mummy, and Jambres was himself again.

'Now will you tell me?' I asked, when he had been given a cigarette and made comfortable, 'why we found you—I mean the mummy—under the Three Balls?'

'Twas a pledge,' he replied. 'When my resources ran low, and my rent was unpaid, the landlady used to take advantage of my condition and raise a small sum on me.'

All seemed now explained; but Leonora was not yet satisfied.

'You have——' she began.

'Yes, a strawberry mark,' he replied wearily, 'on the usual place!'

'The quest is accomplished,' I said.

'Nay,' replied Jambres, to give him his real name. 'There is still the adventure of the Siege Perilous.'

CHAPTER XII.

THE WIZARD'S SCHEME.

'We must, as you are aware, visit the Siege Perilous in the Hall of Egypt, and risk ourselves in the chair of the Viewless Maiden, of Her that is not to be seen of Man.'

'We know it,' said Leonora.

'It is,' continued the mage, 'your wish to accomplish the end for which you set forth. This seems to you an easy matter enough; young hearts are full of such illusions, and, believe me, I would willingly change my years, which are lost in geological time, for one hand's breadth of your daring. Know, then,' continued this strange creature, 'that the time has now come when matters must be brought to an end between us. It will be my business, and, I will add, my pleasure,' he continued with a lofty air which sat drolly enough upon him in his yellow duds, 'to conduct you to the Siege Perilous. From you, in return, I must exact an unquestioning obedience; and I will add a measureless *confidence*. I beg you to bear in mind that the slightest resistance to my will must be followed by consequences of which you cannot estimate either the reach or the extension.'

There was such a parrot-like pomp about the creature's tautology, and such an old-world affectation of fine manners \in his constant obeisances, that I could hold it no longer, but fairly laughed out in his face.

I dreaded, it is true, lest some such fate as Ustâni's might punish me for my temerity, but for reasons which doubtless seemed sufficient to himself the wizard merely looked at me through his veil, shook himself a little in his swathings, and said in a matter-of-fact voice, 'Well, well, perhaps we have had enough of such talk as this. Let's get ahead with the business before us. That business is to reach the Siege Perilous, or Magic Chair. Thither will I guide ye, and there ye shall see what ye shall see. But first it is needful, as all sages have declared, that ye shall show your confidence in me! I value not wealth. Gold is mere dross—nay, I have the mines of King Solomon at my disposal. But when the weary King Ecclesiast confided to me, in his palace of ivory and cedar in Jerusalem, long ago, the secret of these diamond treasures, he bade me reveal it to none who did not show their confidence in me.

'Let *them* entrust *you*,' said Solomon, 'with their paltry wealth, ere *you* place in *their* hands opulence beyond the dreams of avarice. Give me, then, merely as a sign of confidence, gold, much gold, or,' he continued in a confidential and Semitic tone, 'its equivalent in any safe securities, American railways preferred. Don't bring bank-notes, my dear—risky things, risky things! Why, when I was pals with Claude Duval—but 'tis gone, 'tis gone! Now, my dears, what have you got? what have you got?'

'I have,' answered Leonora, in her clear sweet voice and girlish trustfulness, 'as is my invariable custom, my *dot*, namely, 300,000*l.* worth of American railway shares, chiefly Chicago N.W. and L. & N., in my pocket.'

'That's right, my dear, that's right,' said the Erie wizard; 'just hand those to me, and then we can start at once.

'And when (he went on in italics)
o my Leonora
when that mystic change has been worked
which has been predestined
for countless ages and which shall come as
sure as fate,
then on another continent
kindred to thine yet strange, even in the land
of the railways that thy shares are in,
Thou and I,
the Magician and the Novice,
the Celebrated Wizard of the West
and his Accomplished Pupil
Mademoiselle Léonore
will make a tour that shall drag in the
dollars
by the hatful. NOW COME!'

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PERILOUS PATH.

Forth we rushed into the darkness, through the streaming deluge of that tropic clime. For the seraphic frenzy had now come upon the mage in good earnest, and all the Thought-reader burned in his dusky eyes.

We presented, indeed, a strange spectacle, for the mage, in his silvery swathings, held Leonora by the hands, and Leonora held me, as we raced through the gloom.

In any other city our aspect and demeanour had excited attention and claimed the interference of the authorities.

In Berlin Uhlans would have charged us, in Paris grape-shot would have ploughed through our ranks. *Here* they deemed we were but of the sacred race of Thought-readers, who, by a custom of the strange people, are permitted to run at random through the streets and even to enter private houses.

We were not even followed, in our headlong career, by a crowd, for the public had ceased to interest itself in frenzied research for hidden pins or concealed cigarettes.

After a frantic chase Jambres (late 'the Mage') paused, breathless, in front of a building of portentous proportions.

How it chanced I have never been able to understand, but, as I am a living and honourable woman, this hall had the characteristics of ancient Egyptian architecture, and that (miraculous as it may appear) in perfect preservation.

There are the hypostyle halls, the two Osirid pillars—colossal figures of strange gods, in coloured relief—there is the great blue scarab, the cartouche, the *pschent*, the *pschutt*, and all that we admire in the Rameseum of the Ancient Empire.

But all was silent, all was deserted; the vast adamantine portals were closed.

Jambres paused in dismay.

'Since I last gave an exhibition of mine art in those halls,' said he, '(twas in old forgotten days, in Bosco's palmy time), much is altered. OPEN SESAME!' he cried; but, curious to say, *nothing opened!*

At that moment a dark figure crawled submissively to our feet. It was old Pellmelli.

His instinct for 'copy' had brought him on our track, and he began—

'As our representative, I am commissioned——'

Jambres (late 'Asher') turned from him, and he fell (still making notes) prone on his face, where we left him, as the pace was too good to inquire.

The mage now reconnoitred carefully the vast façade of the Hall of Egypt, and finally fixed his gaze on a perpendicular leaden column, adorned with strange symbols, through which (for it was a rainy night) raging torrents of water were distinctly heard flowing downwards to who knows what abysmal and unfathomable depths?

In this weird climate it was the familiar yet dreaded *waterspout!*

Jambres, with the feline agility of a catapult of the mountain, began to climb the perpendicular leaden channel to which he had called our attention, and of course we had to follow him. It was perfectly marvellous to see the ease and grace with which he skipped and hopped up the seemingly naked face of the wall. There were places indeed where our position was perilous enough, and it did not add to our cheerfulness to hear the horrid roaring and gurgling of the unseen and imprisoned waters that poured down the channel with a violence which seemed as if they might at any moment burst their bonds. Helped, however, by certain ledges which projected from the wall beneath square openings filled with some transparent substance, on which ledges from time to time we rested, we arrived at the steep crest, and paused for repose beneath the leafy shade of the roof-tree, Jambres lightly leading the way.

'Now,' said Jambres, 'comes the most delicate part of our journey.'

So indeed it proved, for the mage began rapidly to divest himself of his mysterious swathings. Wrapper by wrapper he undid, cerement on cerement, till both Leonora and I wondered when he would stop.

Stop he did, however, and, with a practised hand, shot his linen into one long rope, which he carefully attached to an erect and smoking pillar, perhaps of basaltic formation, perhaps an ancient altar of St. Simeon Skylitès. When all was taut, Jambres approached a slanting

slope, smooth and transparent, perhaps of glacial origin. On this he stamped, and the fragments tinkled as they fell into unknown deeps. Then he seized the rope, let himself down, and from far below we heard his voice calling to us to follow him.

Leonora and I descended with agility to some monstrous basin in the abyss—the Pit, Jambres called it. Here Jambres met us, and bade us light the railway reading-lamps which, as I forgot to mention, we had brought with us. Then, jumping off with the lead, he advanced along the floor, picking his way with great care, as indeed it was most necessary to do, for the floor was strewn with strange forms, stumbling over the legs and backs of which it would have been easy to break one's own. When we halted, brought up by a barrier, of which I did not at first discern the nature, our lamps (as is sometimes the way of some such patent lamps²⁸) suddenly went out. Jambres whispered hoarsely, 'Wot are yer waitin' for? Come on; ἀλλ' αὐγε. *Nunc est scandendum.*' We saw before us a vast expanse, of which it was impossible to gauge the extent, so impenetrable, so overpowering was the gloom of its blackness. 'It is the abode,' said Jambres, mysteriously, 'of my rival De Kolta!' He himself, owing to his use of his swathings, was sufficiently *décolleté*

²⁸ I think I've managed not to be libellous.—ED.

We shall see.—PUBLISHER.

On the hither side was a row of *lumières à pied* which seemed *afloat* on the darkness, and in their centre a sudden chasm which looked as if it had been made by human agency. The fitful moonbeams²⁹ showed us a most curious and accurately shaped spur, or *run-down* as it is called in the native dialect, which connected the floor on which we stood with the darkness beyond.

²⁹ You've not mentioned them before.—PUBLISHER.

That's why I do now.—ED.

What mortal, however hardy, dared cross this quivering wavering bridge in the total darkness? Beneath our feet it swayed and leaped like rotten ice on the magic Serpentine.

'Hush,' cried Jambres, 'it comes, it comes! Be still!'

Even as he spoke, we saw a *long shaft of yellow light* streaming from an unknown centre, and searching out the recesses of the cavern.

'Be still, as you value your liberty,' whispered Jambres. 'The Bobî is on his beat.'

Then, as the long shaft smote the swaying bridge, he lightly crossed it, and beckoned us to follow. We obeyed, and in another instant all was again darkness.

'He has gone his round,' said Jambres. 'Won't be back for hours!'

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MAGIC CHAIR.

There, on the plateau, or platform, we had seen, stood, in naked mystery, the Enchanted Chair.

'Tis the weird chair of the Viewless Maiden, the place of Her who is no more seen,' said Jambres. 'Who shall sit therein?'

'The writing said,' remarked the dauntless Leonora, 'that a descendant of Theodolitê must achieve this adventure. I am ready.'

'Nay, not so, maiden,' murmured Jambres, 'try it not till I have made experience thereof. Me it cannot harm; in me you see the original inventor; beware of spurious imitations. But it is a dread experience; let me work it first!'

Leonora could not resist his winning manner and concern for her safety.

'I move,' she said, 'that Mr. Jambres do take the chair at this meeting.'

'I second that proposal,' said I, and there was not a dissentient voice.

'Mr. Jambres will now take the chair,' said Leonora, and the wizard, his swathing robes bulging with Leonora's securities, glided forward.

Then an awful thing occurred. No sooner had Jambres sat down than Leonora and I found ourselves—how can we expect it to be believed?—gazing on a blank, bare space!

The chair was still there, but the wizard was gone. Leonora turned to me, horror in her eyes, her golden curls changed to a pale German silver.

'It is the chair of the Vanishing Lady,' she said.

'It is the Confidence Trick,' I cried; and we both lost consciousness as the true state of the case flashed on our minds. The wizard was off with 300,000*l.* in high-class American securities.

CHAPTER XV.

THE END.

What remains to be told is of little public interest. When we came to ourselves, all was darkness. Escape seemed impossible.

We could not swarm up the rope, by the way we had come.

We knew not when the shaft of yellow light might return on its beat.

We lit a Bryant & May's match, and thereby groped our way downwards, ever downwards.

Finally, as we had given up all for lost, Leonora said, 'Don't you think the air is a little stuffy?'

We sniffed about the rocky floor, and found an iron grating.

It yielded to a strong tug, and we descended into subterranean passages, framed by the art of men, through which rolled and surged torrents of turbid water.

Through these we waded, attacked by armies of rats, till, thank goodness! we saw a moving light, flashing hither and thither on the torrent.

Half swimming, half wading, we reached the bearer of the light.

It was old Pellmelli, 'doing a Sanitary special,' as he told us.

We, somewhat deceitfully, led him to believe that we had lost ourselves on a similar errand, for a rival Budget, with which he was concerned in a Paper Mill.³⁰

³⁰ What do you mean by a Paper Mill?—PUBLISHER.

A Journalistic War, then.—ED.

On our faithfully promising to give him exclusive information about our adventures, 'for an Extra,' as he said, old Pellmelli conducted us to an orifice in the rock, whence we escaped, at last, into the light of such day as dwells in the Dark City.

Our hopes now entirely rest on finding Jambres again, but it may be, of course, a good three or four thousand years before that.

Here this strange narrative closes; and as I end my editorial task, I have only one question to ask myself—Will this thing go on? will Jambres and Leonora meet? will the Americans give up Jambres under the Extradition Act? or——

Is the great drama Played Out?—ED.
